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At the risk of touching off a border war with the cheeseheads to the north, Mayor Daley today branded Wisconsin a Johnny-come-lately when it comes to protecting Lake Michigan.

Daley ridiculed Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle for belatedly signing on to the Great Lakes Compact, a multi-state agreement designed to restrict access to a Great Lakes system that provides nearly 20 percent of the world's supply of fresh water.

"Oh, finally. Thank God they realize where the Great Lakes is. Wisconsin has never supported the Great Lakes movement. They wanted to do a lot of things" detrimental to Lake Michigan, the mayor said.

"We've been in the forefront of really protecting the Great Lakes, and Wisconsin hasn't historically. I'm glad they finally realize how important the Great Lakes is. ... The Great Lakes is too important to this region and the future of the region. Water will be equal to oil very shortly" as a precious commodity.

Four years ago, Daley and U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk (R-IL.) and Rahm Emanuel (D-IL.) used a congressional meeting on the Great Lakes to pummel the city of Milwaukee for dumping more raw sewage into Lake Michigan during a single month than at any time in the 11-year history of that city's "not deep enough" tunnel project.

"If there's anything that upsets my constituents - and yours as well - it's cheesehead sewer water," Kirk told Daley during a 2004 roundtable discussion at the Shedd Aquarium.

At the time, Daley demanded that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency throw that book at Milwaukee for the 4.6 billion gallon sewage dump. He accused the state of Wisconsin of coddling its smaller lakes while turning its back on Lake Michigan.

"That's a lot of garbage. Guess where it's coming? It's coming down here. What are we going to do here when we have to shut all our beaches down?" the mayor said then.